



ENGINEERS
AUSTRALIA

OSCAR ALLEN WILSON

Allen Wilson was born in Tamworth NSW in 1924, educated at Tamworth High School and then joined the army in 1942. He survived several years of active war service around the coast of Papua New Guinea. While in the islands he studied Mathematics and English to gain matriculation through the Army Education Service and, on discharge, he enrolled at Sydney University to become a civil engineer. He graduated Bachelor of Engineering in 1951 and joined the NSW Department of Main Roads.

From 1953-55 he worked at Dorman Long in the UK, having won a Federation of British Industries overseas scholarship. He then returned to the DMR where his later work involved the maintenance of the historic ferries and lift span bridges across the Murray and Murrumbidgee rivers.

In 1960 he moved from the western NSW plains to the mountainous, wet and rugged West Coast of Tasmania to build 30km of the Murchison Highway from Rosebery to Tullah and further north. He transferred to the PWD Head Office in Hobart in 1963, rising to Division Engineer, Road Construction and Maintenance, before retiring early in 1983.

He has contributed his time to Engineering Heritage Tasmania (EHT) on most Thursdays for the last 22 years. He attended a training course for oral history interviewers and has recorded interviews with three eminent Tasmanian Engineers.

Allen is an active researcher, collecting and cataloguing information about proposed crossings of the River Derwent dating back to 1832. This research culminated in a detailed record of the design and construction of Hobart's novel Floating Bridge which carried traffic across the River Derwent for 21 years from 1943. On this topic he co-authored a paper presented at the 2011 Engineering Heritage Conference in Hobart. He has also collected material on the historic bush tracks and surveys preceding the construction of the Lyell Highway from Derwent Bridge to Gormanston, linking Hobart to the West Coast in 1932.

His long interest and involvement with computing at work was invaluable in taking over EHT's electronic databases using DBTextWorks software. These databases cover bridges, biographies of engineers and associates, technical papers, equipment and books in EHT's library. The amount of valuable information in these databases has been trebled during Allen's tenure.

